DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 469 396 FL 027 477

AUTHOR	Poliakoff, Anne Rogers, Ed.
TITLE	Foreign Languages: Early Language Learning, Standards for Teacher Preparation, National Security.
INSTITUTION	Council for Basic Education, Washington, DC.
ISSN	ISSN-0196-4984
PUB DATE	2002-04-00
NOTE	25p.; Theme issue. Published 10 times per year.
AVAILABLE FROM	Council for Basic Education, 1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004-1152 ($2). Tel: 202-347-4171; Fax: 202-347-5047; e-mail: info@c-b-e.org. Web site: http://www.c-b-e.org.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Basic Education; v46 n8 April 2002
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classical Languages; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Language Teachers; National Security; Preservice Teacher Education; Public Schools; *Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning

ABSTRACT

This collection of papers makes the case for early and sustained foreign language education as part of the core K-12 curriculum, and for training teachers prepared to create such an education for their students. "Early Language Learning: A National Necessity" (Christine L. Brown), discusses the importance of early language learning, resources for successful K-12 programs, and curriculum and assessment practices. "New Directions: K-12 Foreign Language Teacher Preparation" (Eileen W. Glisan), explores the current status of foreign language teacher education and the impact that new standards projects for teacher preparation may have on the profession. "Language, National Security, and the Nation's Schools" (Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers) examines the nation's inadequate preparation in foreign languages, suggesting that it poses grave risks to national security and noting that the K-12 sector could begin to remedy the situation, ultimately garnering public support on behalf of a broader interactional education. "The Current State of Classics in Schools" (Scot Hicks) considers reasons for continuing to teach the classic languages in elementary and secondary school and suggests the importance of preserving the opportunity to pursue excellence that these studies encourage. (Individual papers contain references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 469 396

Basic Education
Foreign Languages

Vol. 46, No. 8, April 2002

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Madelyn Holmes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Early Language Learning
Standards for Teacher Preparation
National Security

Council for Basic Education (CBE)

A Monthly Forum for Analysis & Comment

FL 027 477

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Vol. 46, No. 8, April 2002

BASIC EDUCATION

A Monthly Forum For Analysis & Comment

Anne Rogers Poliakoff, Editor

Editor's Note..... 1

Early Language Learning:
A National Necessity..... 3
by Christine L. Brown

New Directions: K-12 Foreign Language
Teacher Preparation..... 8
by Eileen W. Glisan

Language, National Security, and
the Nation's Schools..... 13
by Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers

The Current State of Classics in Schools..... 17
by Scot Hicks

Basic Education is published ten times a year by the Council for Basic Education

CBE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Emelda Cathcart, *Chair;*
Norman E. Higgins, *Vice Chair;*
David A. Goslin, *Treasurer;*
Raydean Acevedo, Margaret P. Bates, A. Lee Blitch,
William E. Brock, Terry Dozier, Maxine P. Frost, Janet B. Keeler,
Karan A. Merry, William T. Randall, Janice Weinman.

Jacques Barzun, Carl J. Dolce, *Directors Emeriti.*
A. Graham Down, *President Emeritus.*
Raymond V. Bartlett, *President.*

http://www.c-b-e.org
ISSN 1964984
Copyright 2002, The Council for Basic Education

EDITOR'S NOTE

> When I was quite young I fondly imagined that all foreign languages were codes for English. I thought that "hat," say, was the real and actual name of the thing, but that people in other countries, who obstinately persisted in speaking the code of their forefathers, might use the word "ibu," say, to designate not merely the concept hat, but the English word "hat." Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim At Tinker Creek*

Humor is one way to deal with the disdain for languages other than English that characterizes more Americans and American institutions than we might like to admit. This disdain is reflected by their relative neglect in the K-12 curriculum of many public schools, and in their disappearance from the list of typical requirements for college entrance. Of course, the disregard for the language of other peoples is merely the tip of the iceberg of the ethnocentrism of American culture and schooling, a rich topic for another time and place. Language, however, as several of our contributors note, is the key to melting away that narrow world view and opening the door to broader cross-cultural understanding and communication.

For whether we laugh or cringe in embarrassment, the fact is that foreign language education in the United States is not adequate to produce alert world citizens, let alone the specialists that our national security demands. Our authors Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers quote research findings that after four years of university language training, fewer than 36 percent of the students could read at minimal proficiency, and fewer than 13 percent could speak at that level. Despite the demonstrated benefits of early language learning, Christine L. Brown notes that more than 60 percent of public school students in the United States do not even have the chance to study any language other than English until they are in middle school, or more often, high school.

Our authors make the case for early and sustained foreign language education, as part of the core K-12 curriculum, and for training teachers prepared to create such an education for their students. Christine L. Brown writes about the importance of early language learning, resources for successful K-12 programs, and their curriculum and assessment practices. Eileen W. Glisan explores the current status of foreign language teacher education and the impact that new standards projects for teacher preparation may have on the profession. The nation's inadequate preparation in foreign languages poses grave risks to national security, according to Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers, who suggest how the K-16 education sector could begin to remedy the situation and, ultimately, garner public support on behalf of broader international education. Scot Hicks considers the current state of Classics in elementary and secondary school education, the reasons offered for continuing to teach them, and suggests that we would be wise to preserve the opportunity to pursue excellence that these studies encourage.

Since its founding, the Council for Basic Education has taken the stand that foreign language education must be part of the core curriculum. We hope this issue of *Basic Education* will illuminate the reasons for our continuing commitment.

ARP

EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING: A NATIONAL NECESSITY

By Christine L. Brown

Yesterday, as I was making my annual visits to fifth-grade Spanish classes to discuss the languages that students in our districts can choose to study in sixth grade and beyond, one hand went up.

"When can I start Hindi?" asked a tiny voice amid the hundred or so ten-year-olds from four classes in the school cafeteria.

"Well, unfortunately, we don't offer Hindi right now," I responded. "Perhaps we can show you how you can begin the study of Hindi outside the school day using technology or the Internet."

Later, after most of the students had returned to their classrooms, this same student approached me again.

"Do you already speak Hindi?" I asked.

A huge smile spread across her face, "No, but my mother does—and I do just a little. We were supposed to visit India this summer, but with all that is going on there, we can't right now." A deep look of concentration came over her face. "Do you think I should just keep studying Spanish and then add Hindi later, or should I switch to French in grade six and then add Hindi?"

"Talk it all over with your mother," I suggested, dodging the age-old question of which language is better or more useful. "The important thing is that you began learning one language early enough to enable you to build upon that capacity later, studying other languages as they become essential to your future plans."

These are tough choices for a ten-year-old to ponder, yet, how fortunate she is to be in a public school system where she has such choices. More than 60 percent of public school

students in the United States do not have the chance to study any language other than English until they are in middle school, or more often, high school. Even though our counterparts in other nations begin second language study in the early elementary grades or even in preschool (in the case of France), we in the United States cling to antiquated views and downright misconceptions as to who should study another language and when that study should begin.

In Glastonbury, we have just celebrated the 45th anniversary of our mandatory grade 1-8 public school elementary language

Our counterparts in other nations begin second language study in the early elementary grades or even in preschool. . .

program, as well as the founding of an historic Russian language program in grades 7-12. Every student begins the study of Spanish in first grade and can add other languages (French, Japanese, Latin, or Russian) during the course of his or her twelve years in the district.

Over the years we have graduated thousands of students who now hold important positions in every sector of government, local and international business, humanitarian work, and civic life. Sometimes our graduates return to our community to live so that their children will have the same opportunities to study languages that they did. Many times our former students serve on the town council or the board of education.

Many other districts would like to initiate early language programs, but don't know how to begin. A variety of sources offer helpful information. (See, for example, the websites of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages www.actfl.org, the Center for Applied Linguistics www.cal.org, and the Glastonbury Foreign Language Department www.foreignlanguage.org, as well as the book, *Lessons Learned: Model Early Foreign Language Programs* (2001) by Douglas F. Gilzow and Lucinda E. Branaman.) Many long-

standing programs also host visitors every year from dozens of public schools in the United States. When they come to visit us, what advice do we offer?

First and foremost, consider the language program to be part of the core curriculum. From the beginning, as you plan, make sure that community members and policy makers understand what learning a language and a culture gives to students. Language learning in the early grades provides students with sometimes their first and only contact with real representatives of other cultures. Teachers, whose knowledge of another culture is up-to-date and, usually, firsthand, can provide American students with an understanding that transcends a small child's limited world view. This is not the same language experience that most parents and policy makers have had. They need to observe this process firsthand to fully understand the power of learning languages.

Learning a language takes many years. Not much can be learned and retained after only a two-year sequence. If we think of math and language as somewhat parallel in the need each poses for skill building, symbolic representation, and application, we can begin to comprehend how important it is that all students study language daily, as an integrated part of the required curriculum that starts in kindergarten—the place where the study of all important subjects begins in the United States.

Brain research has confirmed that language learning is highly complex cognitively.

Today, brain research has confirmed that language learning is highly complex cognitively. Gone are the days of thinking of a child's mind as a blank slate upon which meaningless dialogs might be imprinted. From the first day that the child begins learning another language, all the higher order thinking skills are in play—all at once. From comparing to hypothesizing, the child learner is building a new symbolic code outside the familiar framework of his or her native linguistic and culture code. Learning an additional language, no matter at what stage

of life, is a brain-crunching experience: that is why students in our district who experience this mental and emotional challenge from first grade on, love the process. Granted, our teachers also work very hard to make that process one of the most exciting and stimulating experiences they will have, every day, in school.

In successful, long-standing early language programs in the United States, the curriculum is thematic and interdisciplinary. Themes, vocabulary, and language elements are carefully articulated and connected to each grade's curriculum in language arts, science, mathematics, history, and social science. Assessments of student progress in language may cover content and skills from other subjects, thus reinforcing and even testing for the same knowledge as state or national basic skills tests.

For example, in our district, we perform cross-discipline assessment in reading comprehension and in writing. In language classes we reinforce the work of English language arts teachers by teaching the same strategies for reading comprehension and writing that Connecticut tests in grades 4, 8, and 10. Our district test scores in these areas are very high. Administrators speculate that our scores are so high in part because language teachers share with elementary classroom teachers and English language arts teachers the responsibility for preparing students to master the skills and concepts the state tests in English.

In language classes we reinforce the work of English . . .teachers by teaching the same strategies for reading comprehension and writing that Connecticut tests. . .

State of the art early language programs have also embraced the concepts embedded in the national foreign language standards. Those standards, developed in the mid-1990s and widely accepted in the profession, make so much sense.

Performance assessment focuses on the ability of students to communicate in the new language, but what they communicate about is developmentally and grade level appropriate. In addition, learning about the culture is now central to language learning.

Educators in our profession continue to work at a macro level on the relationship between language and culture. In fact, our national ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) conference theme for next fall is "Beyond Our Customary Borders: Language and Culture in Context." At the micro level, most language teachers in the classroom understand that children love the cultural aspects of language. Elementary language teachers work hard to embed profound and meaningful experiences with culture into every lesson, giving students both a lens and a toolkit with which to view and to repair the world they will inherit.

Christine L. Brown is the Director of Foreign Language and ESOL for the Glastonbury Public Schools in Glastonbury, Connecticut. She is the President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

NEW DIRECTIONS: K-12 FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER PREPARATION

By Eileen W. Glisan

The preparation of foreign language teachers has gained new attention in recent years as public policy in the United States has reemphasized the importance of the K-12 study of foreign languages. With its inclusion in Goals 2000 (1994), the study of foreign languages was declared part of the K-12 core curriculum, and federal funding subsidized the development of new national standards released in 1996, *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century.* These standards enabled the profession, for the first time, to define expectations for what public school students should know and be able to do as a result of studying foreign languages. The year 1999 saw the publication of language-specific K-16 standards for nine languages *(Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century).*

As the profession transforms these standards from philosophical ideals enshrined on paper to the realities of classroom practice, it has become clear that their realization depends on whether teachers have the knowledge and skills to implement them. What is the current status of foreign language teacher preparation?

First, our profession is about to experience a transition in response to major challenges, including increased demand and inadequate supply of foreign language teachers, more teachers entering the field through alternative certification, and new standards for foreign language teacher candidates, novices, and more experienced teachers. In the face of these challenges, the few studies that document the characteristics of pre-service foreign language education indicate that the traditional model of preparation is still used by most teacher education

programs: candidates complete university course work in foreign language and in education and student teach in a public school (Schrier, 1993; Wolf & Riordan, 1991). Institutions of higher learning house their foreign language teacher preparation programs either in the college of education, probably the most common model, or in a department of foreign languages. In college of education programs, candidates usually complete their course work in the foreign language first and then do education courses and student teaching. Since candidates complete their academic study of languages outside the college of education, there is often no way to verify that a student has achieved specific competencies in the foreign language. In smaller colleges and universities, candidates tend to receive generic teacher preparation; that is, they may not have the opportunity to take a course in how to teach foreign languages, and often, a college faculty member whose field is not foreign language education supervises their student teaching.

Teacher candidates whose programs are housed in departments of foreign languages more often take foreign language methods courses and are supervised by a faculty member who knows the language. However, the quality of these programs depends on the qualifications of the faculty

New teachers often graduate from . . . preparation programs unable to speak the foreign language well enough to teach effectively.

member who has responsibility for teacher education. These faculty members may be knowledgeable about language teaching theory and practice, but anecdotal evidence suggests that, too often, those whose primary expertise is literature rather than pedagogy teach methods courses and supervise field experiences.

New teachers often graduate from four- and five-year preparation programs unable to speak the foreign language well enough to teach effectively (Glisan 2001). There are

several explanations: many postsecondary language programs still emphasize either "language skills" or "literature/culture/content" rather than nurturing language proficiency, many lack a well-designed study abroad requirement, and many have no exit proficiency requirement.

Until recently, our profession has not had a set of standards, arrived at by broad-based consensus, to describe what we expect teacher candidates to know and be able to do upon graduation. State teacher certification requirements, as well as the expectations of teacher preparation institutions, are often linked to standards established by the discipline's learned

The new standards are expected to have a significant impact on teacher preparation programs.

society (in our case, ACTFL, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). Without nationally recognized foreign language standards, state departments of education and certifying institutions have not had guidance as to which teacher competencies to expect or how to assess their achievement.

Fortunately, the National Foreign Language Standards Collaborative, in conjunction with ACTFL, is designing new foreign language teacher education standards that will be approved and used by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in their reviews of institutions seeking national accreditation, and will guide state departments of education in certification. This standards-writing project has brought together foreign language professionals from across the country to consider the expected competencies of new language teachers. The new standards are expected to have a significant impact on teacher preparation programs.

1. Institutions seeking NCATE accreditation will need to submit evidence that their foreign language teacher candidates for grades P-12 have met standards in six areas: languages, linguistics, comparisons; cultures, literatures,

cross-disciplinary concepts; language acquisition theories and instructional practices; integration of standards into curriculum and instruction; assessment of languages and cultures; and professionalism. (Consult www.actfl.org for the complete standards document.)

2. Programs will create an assessment system through which they gather evidence of candidates' achievement such as portfolios, lesson plans, case study reports, presentations, papers, examinations, interviews, projects, and P-12 student work samples.

3. Teacher candidates must demonstrate proficiency in speaking and writing at the "Advanced Low" level described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1999); candidates teaching languages that use non-alphabetic writing systems must demonstrate "Intermediate High" proficiency.

4. Colleges of education and departments of foreign languages will need to collaborate in order to help their teacher candidates achieve required knowledge, skills, and dispositions (defined by NCATE as values, attitudes, and professional ethics) in pedagogy and language, culture, and literature.

The profession is already moving into a new era, as more sessions at state, regional, and national conferences consider

Teacher candidates must demonstrate proficiency in speaking and writing at the "Advanced Low" level.

teacher preparation in light of the proposed standards. Foreign language departments are beginning to search for new hires with expertise in both pedagogy and literature. Teacher candidates whose institutions do not offer a foreign language teaching methodology course may now take the online methods course recently developed by Weber State University in Utah in collaboration with ACTFL. While there is much yet to be done, the various standards projects have provided new impetus for foreign language professionals to build consensus

concerning qualifications that new language teachers should possess and the ways teacher education programs can best prepare them.

Eileen W. Glisan, Ph.D. is Professor of Spanish and Coordinator of Spanish Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is also Co-Director of the ACTFL-NCATE Foreign Language Teacher Education Program Standards Project.

References

ACTFL proficiency guidelines. (1999). Yonkers, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Glisan, E. W. (2001). Reframing teacher education within the context of quality, standards, supply, and demand. In R. Lavine (Ed.), *Beyond the boundaries: Changing contexts in language learning* (pp. 165-200). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1996). *National standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century.* Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1999). *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century.* Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.

Schrier, L. L. (1993). Prospects for the professionalization of foreign language teaching. In G. Guntermann (Ed.), *Developing language teachers for a changing world* (pp. 105-123). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

Wolf, W. C., & Riordan, K. M. (1991). Foreign language teachers' demographic characteristics, in-service training needs, and attitudes toward teaching. *Foreign Language Annals, 24,* 471-47.

LANGUAGE, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND THE NATION'S SCHOOLS

By Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers

The tragic events of September 11 demonstrated once again that the United States is unprepared to deal with the intercultural communications requirements of national security. FBI Director Robert Mueller's observations last September regarding the capacity of the FBI—and the U.S. government in general—in Arabic and Farsi indicated that the U.S. is linguistically unprepared for the demands of national security in the era of globalization and terrorism—or asymmetric warfare. A recent study showed that more than eighty federal agencies have foreign language requirements, from the Departments of State and Defense to the intelligence community to domestic and international law enforcement (Crump 2001). Yet shortfalls persist. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (2002) noted that the inadequacy of language skills in the intelligence community poses national security concerns: "The most pressing such need is for greater numbers of foreign language-capable intelligence personnel, with increased fluency in specific and multiple languages."

The output of America's educational system is insufficient to meet this need. Data from the American Council of Teachers of Russian and the National Security Education Program show that the median speaking proficiency of American college graduates, after four years of language study in five languages critical to national security (Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Korean, and Japanese), is 1 on a scale of 5, with 2 the absolute minimum for functional proficiency and 3 the minimum for professionals to practice in another language. More specifically, after four years of university language study the percentage of learners reaching minimal proficiency across three skills is as follows

(Frank 2001):

- Reading: 35.4 percent at level 2 and above [N=400]
- Listening: 9 percent at level 2 and above [N=378]
- Speaking: 12.5 percent at level 2 and above [N=263]

America's linguistic unpreparedness is a result of the lack of priority our educational system gives to languages: we do not teach enough foreign languages for enough years to enough students at any level in any sector. As a result, U.S. government agencies, as well as public service providers and the private sector, recruit linguists and other professionals with foreign language expertise from a very small pool of linguistically competent Americans.

While education in the United States—especially primary and secondary education—is a state and local responsibility, the federal government intervenes when national interest is at stake. In mathematics and science, times of crisis have produced major federal resources: The Civil War engendered the National Academy of Sciences, the First World War produced the National Research Council, the Second World War spawned the National Science Foundation, and the Cold War resulted in the National Defense Education Act. Language is a latecomer to the table, considered a vital aspect of national security only in the past fifty years: the Army Special Training Program in World War Two, the National Defense Education Act at the height of the Cold War, and the Foreign Language Assistance Program and the National Security Education Act at its demise. Even when language is the target of federal intervention, however, its funding is extremely modest in comparison with math and science.

The nation requires a national strategy dedicated to language, national security, and the federal workforce. First, while a much broader agenda is needed in this country with regard to cross-cultural understanding and communication, language is the focus that is capable of marshalling public support on behalf of broader international education, including area studies and global professional education. Second, national security interests remain the driving force with federal policy makers. Rightly or wrongly, arguments in favor of a better educated, more just, and globally aware society are

viewed as education issues, and therefore a state and local responsibility. Finally, consistent with this focus on national interest, the target for federal support has to be the federal workforce concerned with national security.

The development of experts as well as linguistically and culturally informed citizens implies a distinction between a *selective* and a *universal* language education policy. The exploding national need does not require that *all* Americans acquire superior language expertise, only that a cadre of professionals attains sufficiently advanced linguistic and cultural skills to enable them to work efficiently and effectively in today's globalized environment (Lambert 1989). By the same token, a call for all Americans to engage in language study does not imply that advanced proficiency should be the

The development of experts as well as linguistically and culturally informed citizens implies a distinction between a* selective *and a* universal *language education policy.

primary goal, only that every American should have enough language competency for cross-cultural communication and should have studied a language in anticipation of further learning when professional or personal circumstances might require it. Accordingly, the purpose of the *selective* language education policy would be to ensure that the education system produce the requisite numbers of professionals with superior language competence. This policy would have language competence as a goal and would include targets for numbers of linguistically competent U.S. citizens, languages, and levels of proficiency.

The goal of a *selective* language education policy would be to establish a national system of schools, colleges, and universities that would cooperate to recruit students to language study early in their education and retain them long enough to graduate them at advanced proficiency. Such a

"Unified National Critical Languages Education System" would consist of: 1) schools of choice at the K-8 level, including total immersion programs, dual language programs, language magnet programs, and the like; 2) heritage language education schools and programs across the country, representing this nation's greatest natural resource for language competence, the millions of native speakers of languages other than English; 3) outstanding high school language programs with four years of instruction as well as exchange and study abroad opportunities; and 4) higher education flagship language programs capable of graduating students from across the disciplines in critical languages at advanced proficiency (presumably at the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable/ American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language "distinguished" level). Many of the elements of this policy exist, albeit in nascent form (the National Flagship Language Initiative) or dispersed at a low level (schools of choice, dual language programs). Development of these systems will require federal funding and more importantly, sustained attention from Congress and the executive branch.

Richard D. Brecht is Director and William P. Rivers is Associate for Language Policy at The National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

References

Ted Crump. (2001). *Translating and Interpreting in the Federal Government.* Alexandria, VA: American Translators Association.

Frank, Victor M. (2001). *Language Learning at Advanced and Above: Individual and Programmatic Characteristics.* Presented at ACTFL 2001, November 16, 2001, Washington, DC.

Richard Lambert articulated a selective approach to language education shortly after founding the National Foreign Language Center. Cf. Lambert, Richard. (1989). "The National Foreign Language System." *NFLC Occasional Paper.* Washington, DC: The National Foreign Language Center.

FBI Director Robert Mueller, September 17, 2001. Quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2001, p. A9.

House Report 107-219 on the Intelligence Authorization Act of 2002. p.18.

THE CURRENT STATE OF CLASSICS IN SCHOOLS

By Scot Hicks

The study of Latin and Greek in schools shrank to near extinction in 20th century Europe and the United States. At the beginning of the 21st, it hardly deserves a mention in the grand statistical scheme of things. By saying this, I fly in the face of the optimism of a generation of colleagues who have dedicated their careers to recovering from the debacle of the 1960s, when Latin enrollments in American high schools, then at 700,000, began a free fall, by 1975, to 150,000. By 1994, they had climbed back to 189,000.

The best "academic" schools in Europe and America, some math and science schools excepted, still offer Latin and most offer Greek. A handful of pupils are still attracted by the rigor and beauty of the languages and toy with the idea of going on to study Classics at the best universities in this country, or follow the traditional routes in Europe. Or they take to other endeavors an ability *sine qua non* to read closely and to write carefully. For this handful, graduates of these same university programs will continue amply to supply the demand for qualified teachers.

In the United States, other reasons have arisen for studying Latin in the last thirty years or so, and it is likely from these that the still small but relative resurgence of interest in Latin, noted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, comes. I refer to successful attempts by public school boards to reintroduce Latin as a way to improve English skills and performance on standardized tests, and to the centrality of Latin to the Classical and Christian Classical schools movement and to the homeschoolers inspired by it. Here a critical demand for qualified teachers has been met partially by special teacher training programs like the one at the University of Massachusetts, or by the overflow of teachers from traditional schools. Frequently, however, one encounters

teachers in this latest generation of schools whose training began as a "minor" in college or seminary. Training in both languages is rare, and the one language is often self-taught.

Teaching Methods

The teaching of Latin and Greek in the English-speaking world changed profoundly in the early 1970s. Until then, Latin was most commonly introduced in the United States in high school by way of a systematic approach to grammar—one declension or conjugation at a time.

Change came from Great Britain in the form of a new generation of textbooks designed to begin teaching Latin at

Change came from Great Britain in the form of a new generation of textbooks designed to begin teaching Latin at age eleven or twelve.

age eleven or twelve. To a great extent, they were inspired by modern language instruction. In each lesson, pupils read extended Latin prose in the form of an ongoing narrative before they learn vocabulary or formal grammar, thereby encouraging an inductive form of learning. Drills and exercises encourage use of the spoken language and often involve substitution, matching, or multiple-choice in the manner of modern language books. The great strength of this method is its insistence that students be able to read and understand a text as it appears on the page and happens to the ear. As any student of a modern language, we are meant to learn to think, to hear, to read, in the patterns of a native speaker and writer. In order to pull it off, the teacher must of course be a fluent reader, ideally a fluent speaker as well.

Latin programs for younger beginners still have sprung up in different quarters. For these, the American Classical League's Exemplary Latin Programs for Elementary Schools packets are a good resource, frequently updated. Classical Christian schools and homeschoolers generally look to the program created at

the Logos School in Idaho. Here again, the primary inspiration seems to have come from modern language instruction in the elementary years, with its reliance on chants, songs, and games as a natural method of acquiring language patterns. Initially troubling—but perhaps too early to judge—is the absence of any sense of nobility about the endeavor. We do not seem to be interested in producing a Montaigne.

The teaching of Greek in schools is a rarity and almost always follows the introduction of Latin by two or more years. Impediments to starting with Greek have been tradition, the hurdle of a new alphabet to learn, and the smaller occurrence of cognates. Against these, Greek holds the advantage of a word order closer to English. The ability to read comes more quickly, and the body of literature to read is far richer in variety and depth.

Why Latin and Greek?

Many good reasons have been put forward for sticking to Latin and Greek in schools or returning to them. They most commonly have to do with improving English skills or preserving a cultural legacy. One peculiarly American reason that is seldom heard (for obvious reasons) lies in the serious dearth of competent modern language teachers in many small communities throughout the country. Clearly more is to be gained by two or more years of traditional Latin instruction

The best reason for their study is also the cause of their decline.

than by the same amount of time spent reciting "At the Restaurant" dialogues in a classroom where nobody masters the language. And finally, there have been attempts to fly the multicultural flag for Classics, a sort of trickle-down effect of the politicization of some university Classics departments.

But the best reason for their study is also the cause of their decline. The situation was described succinctly by C.S. Lewis in "Democratic Education," a short essay first published in 1944. Latin declined as a compulsory subject because, like

mathematics, it is a subject in which some pupils "do very much better than others." Because we saw that all pupils will not do well in these difficult subjects, we decided they should not have to try. Meanwhile the elite will continue to provide their children the opportunity. The abandonment of aristocratic for egalitarian education will destroy democracy, Lewis argues cogently. He wrote at the mid-point between a time when American universities offered remedial Latin to "probationary" students and a time when they supply remedial algebra. What's the point? They can all study *something*. We have successfully replaced self-knowledge with self-esteem.

The real reason to study Latin and Greek is to give us a view from Parnassus, as eloquently described in Tracy Lee Simmons' new apologia for Latin and Greek, *Climbing Parnassus*. Yes, Latin and Greek are demanding. All should be provided an opportunity to rise to the challenge, as they have in inner-city schools in Philadelphia and Los Angeles where students in elementary grades who studied Latin also showed dramatic improvement in their English verbal skills. They teach how rich and delicate the tool of language is, how difficult and rewarding its mastery. Indeed, they are the only discipline in the humanities that I have regularly seen steal some of the best minds from mathematics and sciences. Classical languages will remain a powerful cultural force because of their quality and irrespective of their popularity. If they can survive the ideological flag-waving of the age and continue to attract talent, they may save the humanities yet.

Scot Hicks, currently headmaster at Hillsdale Academy in Michigan, has taught Latin and Greek since 1978. A new translation, with his brother and Darlington School President David Hicks, of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations, The Emperor's Handbook, will appear on Scribner Press in November 2002.

Council for Basic Education

CBE has been an independent, critical voice for education reform for more than forty years. Its goal is to influence education in the United States through advocacy for high academic standards and excellence in teaching of the core subjects for all children in the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

You now have a chance to enter the national debate on education. Here is how you can support CBE and its goal to improve learning and teaching!

☐ Yes. I want to become a supporter of CBE. I enjoyed reading this issue of *Basic Education* and would like a subscription.

Enclosed is my annual **$50** support.

Name_____

Title/Position_____

Organization_____

Address_____

City_____ State____ Zip_____

Phone_____ Fax_____

E-mail_____

Visa or Master Card_____

Expiration date _____

Signature_____

Please make checks payable to:
Council for Basic Education
1319 F Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004-1152
(202) 347-4171; FAX (202) 347-5047
e-mail: info@c-b-e.org
Web site: www.c-b-e.org
Contributions in excess of $25 are tax-deductible.

CBE
COUNCIL FOR
BASIC EDUCATION

An Independent Voice for Educational Excellence

COUNCIL FOR BASIC EDUCATION
1319 F Street, NW
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004-1152

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
Permit No. 9392

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Championing High Academic Standards for All Students

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").